

Faith and Confession

Romans 10:9-10

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Our text is Romans 10:9-10. It says, **"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved."**

This is one of several texts in Paul's epistles where he sums up the gospel message in a simple, short sentence or two. Every now and then, in Paul's writings, he'll make a concise summary statement about the way of salvation, summing up the heart of the gospel in a simple, condensed statement. And these are all vital biblical references. Ephesians 2:8-9 is one of them: **"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."** Titus 3:5 is another: **"he saved us [Christ did], not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."** Romans 4:4-5 is another: **"Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."** Galatians 2:16 is

another: **"We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ."**

Always, Paul's focus is the same: salvation is not something that can be earned by merit or obtained by human works, but justification is a work of God' grace, by which **"the righteousness of God [is imputed] through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe"** (Romans 3:22). Salvation is wrought through Christ's work on our behalf. God saves us for Christ's sake, not to honor us or reward us for anything we do, but to honor Christ for what He did. Salvation is a gift of God, not something earned by works. And faith is the sole instrument by which we lay hold of it. That is the consistent teaching of the apostle Paul, and it is the consistent teaching of all Scripture.

Now, to some of you, these may seem easy and elementary truths, things you hear about all the time. You may even be tempted to tune me out and think this message isn't for you, because you have already believed the gospel and embraced Christ by faith as Savior. But I want to urge you not to tune me out. If you think you've reached the point where you don't need to hear basic gospel truth taught and explained, then maybe you haven't quite laid hold of the vast fullness of the gospel message yet. Because the gospel is not only the way of salvation; it is the ground of our assurance as well. And the faith that first lays hold of justification at the initial moment of conversion is the same faith that is

instrumental in sanctification as well. We all need to be reminded of the basic truth of the gospel all the time. So don't tune me out, even if you are someone who has been a Christian for many years. The truth of this text is for you, too, and you need to be reminded of it.

Still, there's nothing particularly complex or difficult about these two verses. They are a simple summary of the way of salvation, and they feature in very few words a number of key ideas that lie at the heart of the gospel message, and therefore at the core of the Christian faith.

Like all Scripture, this passage is not to be considered in isolation from the rest of Scripture, and its full meaning is made clear by the context. So we'll examine both the immediate and the broader contexts as we work our way through this text, but I want to do it by highlighting the same key concepts Paul mentions in the text itself.

There are three ideas that are repeated in each of these two verses. Notice: both verses speak of confession; both speak of faith; and both speak of salvation. In verse 9, it's *confession*, then *faith*, then *salvation*. In verse 10, it's *faith*, then *confession*, then *salvation*. And I want to examine each of those ideas in reverse order from the way they appear in verse 9. First is—

1. SALVATION

The context makes clear that the subject is *spiritual* salvation—salvation from sin; redemption from the guilt and the penalty of sin; rescue from the wrath of God and the eternal punishment that Scripture says is owed to everyone who violates the law of God.

In fact, the immediate context is dealing with the question of salvation for Israel. Paul is speaking particularly of the unbelieving leaders of Israel (the Sanhedrin, the leading Pharisees, the leading Sadducees)—those who hated Christ most—as well as the majority of the Jewish nation who looked to them for leadership. National Israel—the earthly nation. Paul says they had rejected and killed their own Messiah; they had spurned the true righteousness of God; and they were going about trying to establish a substitute righteousness of their own—an external, hypocritical, *self*-righteousness that would ultimately result in their condemnation rather than their salvation.

You're in Romans 10. Look back at verse 1:

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

3 For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

Now, the fact that he's talking about salvation presupposes the *need* for salvation. That should be obvious, but it nevertheless needs to be pointed out. There's an implicit acknowledgement of our human fallenness, our dilemma as sinners, in the very idea of "salvation."

In other words, there's something we need to be saved *from*, and it's our sin. That's where you have to start in order for any of this to make sense. You have to acknowledge, first of all, that you are a sinner in need of salvation.

In fact, that's the very issue Paul *did* start with back in the first three chapters of this same epistle to the church at Rome. He's giving a detailed, systematic account of the gospel, and he starts with the fact of sin. Starting in Romans 1:18 and continuing through Romans 3:20, Paul had already systematically demonstrated that everyone—including the out-and-out pagans, the religious Gentiles, and the Jews—*everyone*—is sinful and in need of salvation. He sums up the point in Romans 3:23: "**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.**" Romans 3:10: "**There is none righteous, no, not one.**" But (Romans 3:9) "**both Jews and Gentiles . . . are all under sin.**"

And, by the way, because we are under sin, we are also under the wrath of God (Romans 1:18): "**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.**"

That's the human dilemma. It's not just loneliness, or low self-esteem, or depression, or an empty life—or any of the other personal problems people today like to focus on instead of their sin and their guilt. All those other things are *fruits* of sin, but they're not the root of the problem. The real problem with our sin is not just that it makes us feel bad or causes us emotional stress. It's that our sin has separated us from God and placed us under His wrath. We need to be right with God, and that is a more pressing and important need than all the self-centered needs most people today spend their time obsessing over.

That is the starting point of the gospel. That's the problem and the universal human dilemma the gospel addresses: We are all sinners, and therefore we are subject to judgment and eternal wrath. We cannot do *anything* to save ourselves from that predicament. We need someone else to save us. And only Christ can do that. Acts 4:12: **"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

Now the Pharisees, and the Sanhedrin, and the majority of Israel rejected the idea that their spiritual condition was *that* hopeless. They would have embraced a Messiah who would have ended their oppression under the Roman emperors. They were ready to follow a Messiah who would give them food and physical healing and make them feel better about themselves. But as soon as they realized Christ's mission was

to rescue them from sin—and that required them to admit that they were hopeless sinners in need of that kind of salvation, they turned against Him and ultimately killed Him.

Now, don't misunderstand me: Most of them probably would have admitted that they had sinned, just like most people today, if you press them, will say, *Oh sure, I've "sinned." I've made mistakes. I've done things I'm not proud of. I'm not perfect. Nobody is. But I'm not that bad. My situation isn't really hopeless. I'm getting better. Every day and in every way, I'm getting better and better.*

According to Romans 10:3, they still believed they could establish their own righteousness. They didn't see their own sin as any real impediment to earning God's approval. They were "**ignorant of the righteousness of God,**" Paul says. They didn't understand the utter perfection God demands. They wouldn't submit to His righteousness, because it would have condemned them. And they refused to acknowledge the hopelessness of their condition. They were convinced that their external obedience to the ceremonies and the rituals prescribed in the law made them better than everyone else. So they were satisfied with an external show of righteousness, and they were ignorant of their need for a better kind of righteousness.

That is why Paul makes such a clear and dramatic contrast in verses 5-6 between two kinds of righteousness. One is self-righteousness, which always condemns and can never

save. In verse 5, he calls it **"the righteousness that is based on the law."**

In other words, the kind of righteousness that depends on what *I* do always condemns, (even if what I am trying to do is be obedient to God's law) because I cannot fulfill the law's demand for perfect obedience. I never obey perfectly. But the law demands total perfection. James 2:10 says, **"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."** Jesus said it this way in Matthew 5:20: **"[Unless] your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."** And then Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, **"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."**

Paul said that if you want to *work* for your own salvation, you'll be paid whatever wage you earn. He made that very point back in Romans 4:4: **"Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due."** If you want to get paid a reward according to your own works, just remember that the wages of sin is death, and it only takes one infraction of God's law to be accounted a sinner and worthy of death. That's why it is utterly hopeless to think you can earn favor with God by what you do. To attempt to do that is the very definition of self-righteousness—self-dependence on your own righteousness.

But there's another kind of righteousness. In verse 6, Paul calls it "**the righteousness based on faith.**" In verse 3, he makes it clear that it's *God's* righteousness—a truly perfect righteousness *because* it is God's own righteousness. Back in Romans 3:22, Paul said that "**the righteousness of God [God's own perfect, flawless righteousness] . . . is [bestowed through] faith [in] Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.**" Romans 4 then goes on to describe in detail how that righteousness is imputed, or reckoned, to the account of every believer, by faith, apart from our works. So those who simply believe get credit for a perfect righteousness that is not in any way the fruit of what they do. It's something they receive by faith. It's a righteousness they don't earn, but they get credit for it. That's the righteousness that saves.

Notice: Here in verse 4, Paul says that the righteousness that saves is the righteousness of Christ. It's not only God's righteousness; more specifically, it belongs to Christ and was wrought by Him for us. Verse 4: "**For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.**" The word translated "end" is the Greek word *telos*. It means Christ is the object, the goal, and the fulfillment of the law on our behalf. You might read the English expression and think it means simply that Christ has put an end to the law by overthrowing it or declaring it null and void. That's not what it means. It means that he has fulfilled the law on our behalf. He *is* the end (He is the goal and the object) of the law. He is

that to which the law points. Obviously, He fulfilled the law's moral demands perfectly, because He was sinless. But He also fulfilled the penalty God demands of those who transgress His law. He did both things as our substitute. He fulfilled the law in our place; and He bore the law's penalty in our stead. Therefore His righteousness—the perfect righteousness of God incarnate—is put to our account, in the very same way that our sins were put to His account on the cross. He is quite simply the perfect fulfillment of every intention and every design that was built into God's law.

That is why self-righteousness can never save, but there is a righteousness that *does* save. It's God's righteousness, not ours. It is Christ's righteousness and the perfect fulfillment of the law. And it's received by faith, not earned by works.

By the way, Paul makes a similar contrast between the two kinds of righteousness in Philippians 3:9, where he says he wants to be "**found in [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.**"

So that is what salvation is all about. That's the only way salvation is possible. It is the result of a righteousness that we don't earn or contribute to with our own works. It's something Christ alone has done for us, on our behalf. And you can't have it if you want to earn it on your own. Because if you think you can earn it on your own, you're not really

looking for *salvation*; you're imagining that you can earn eternal life as a *reward*, and that was the very error that kept the unbelieving Israelites cut off from the possibility of salvation.

It's important to understand those truths at the very beginning: you *need* salvation. You need to be saved from the wrath of God and be justified in His eyes. You cannot save yourself. Even if you could reform yourself enough to be absolutely perfect from now until the end of your life, you still can't afford the price you would have to pay for your *past* sins. But more than that, God's standard of righteousness is so high that you could never attain it anyway. So don't imagine that you can do anything to save yourself.

But here's why the gospel is good news: the very thing you need most is available by faith to all who simply put their trust in Christ. The perfect righteousness you need but could never earn on your own is the very thing verse 10 means when it says, "**with the heart one believes and is justified.**" The familiar King James Version says the same thing, but says it this way, "**with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.**" Perfect righteousness. Not your own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, unto all and upon all who believe. And that brings us to the second of the three great ideas that stand out on the face of our text:

2. FAITH

In many ways this goes to the very heart of Paul's point. It is faith in contrast to works—something you *believe* as opposed to something you *do*. Paul's answer to the Philippian jailer's question is notable for its single-minded simplicity. In Acts 16:30, the jailer asked, "**What must I do to be saved?**" Paul didn't give him a list of works to perform or a liturgy of sacraments to observe. This is the simple, biblical answer to the urgent question of every seeking heart (Acts 16:31):

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

In our text, Paul is saying the same thing. "**If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**" Now, at first glance, you might think he has added an act of verbal confession to the simple condition of faith, but that's not the point, and I'll show you that in a moment. For now, though, let's examine what he means by the idea of believing in Christ with your heart.

The context makes clear that Paul is stressing the utter simplicity of faith in the finished work of Christ. Look at the preceding verses, starting with verse 5. This is not an easy passage to understand, but when you see what Paul is saying here, his logic is brilliant.

Remember, he is contrasting two kinds of righteousness—self-righteousness versus imputed righteousness. The mistake of the unbelieving Israelites was

that they thought they could establish their own righteousness. They were pursuing a legal righteousness that they imagined was derived from their obedience to Moses' law.

So Paul calls Moses himself as a witness against that kind of works-religion. And in verse 5, he is quoting from Leviticus 18:5, which is simply a promise of life and blessing to those who obey the law. Listen to Leviticus 18:4-5. God is speaking, and He says: "**You shall follow my rules and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. Lev 18:5 You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.**" That was the *promise* of the law: "do and live." And the same thing is reiterated repeatedly in Scripture. You find that same verse quoted again in Nehemiah 9:29 and three times in Ezekiel 20. I believe Jesus was making reference to that very same text (Leviticus 18:5), when a certain lawyer asked the same question as the Philippian jailer. Luke 10:25 says, "**behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'**"

Now, there's a significant difference between this guy and the Philippian jailer. The jailer was feeling his sin and sincerely seeking salvation. The lawyer, notice, was just putting Jesus to the test. He didn't really sense his own need. So Jesus turned the question back on him and pointed him back to the law: *What do you think? What does the law say?*

So the lawyer recited back to Jesus the first and second great commandments: **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."** He gave the *legal* answer—the answer of the law, rather than the answer of the gospel.

Luke 10:28 says Jesus told him, **"You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."** That *is* the only answer the law can give: do and live. But the gospel has a completely different answer, as we're going to see.

Before we see that, though. Notice this: there's another message also contained in the law. There's not only a promise of life to those who obey; there's also a curse for those who *disobey*. Galatians 3:10: **"For it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.'" That's a quote from Deuteronomy 27:26. Also, Jeremiah 11:3 says, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not [heed] the words of this covenant."**

You can't have the promise of the law without the curse, too. And that is Paul's point in verse 5. **"The man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness."** You have to obey the law perfectly to benefit from its promise of life, and if you don't, the righteousness which is by law demands death as a penalty.

In Galatians 3 Paul says something very similar to what he says here in Romans 10, and it's worth looking at, because it sheds some light on this passage and the meaning of Leviticus 18:5 and the law's promise of life for obedience ("**So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them.**").

So turn for a moment to Galatians 3:12. Keep a marker here, but turn over to Galatians 3. Notice, verse 10 is where Paul cites the curse of the law. Therefore, he says, you can't be justified by doing the law (verse 11) because you can't do it perfectly and the law curses every imperfection. But, he points out, even the Old Testament recognized that the just shall live by *faith*. And there Paul is quoting Habakkuk 2:4, which he also quotes in Romans 1:17 as proof that justifying righteousness is acquired by faith, not by works. That's gospel truth, not legal truth, because, as he says in Galatians 3:12, "**But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does [the commandments] shall live by them.'**"

So that is Paul's argument against those who try to justify themselves before God by their own works: works cannot justify, because the same law that promises life for obedience also pronounces a curse for disobedience, and that makes true righteousness utterly impossible for sinners. So the law's promise of life is illusive and impossible. It's "not of faith," he says, and faith is the true way of salvation. That is the

promise of the gospel, and it's better than the promise of life that was attached to the law.

Notice, also, that he goes on to say in Galatians 3:13 that **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law."**

Now, listen, because this is the heart of the case Paul is making: Christ not only redeemed us from the curse of the law; he also obtained the promise of the law on our behalf. That's why the law promised life in the first place. Because a redeemer would come who could obey the law perfectly, and He would do it on our behalf. He has done everything the law requires of us—including die. Look at Galatians 3:13: **"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, [written in Deuteronomy 21:23] 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.'" Or as Deuteronomy 21:23 has it, "A hanged man is cursed by God."** Christ was cursed for us—made the living embodiment of every curse ever uttered. But God accepted His sacrifice as payment in full for the sin of others, and the proof of that—the ultimate vindication of Christ and the proof of our salvation—is seen in the fact that God has raised him from the dead.

Now, go back to Romans 10 and look at this: Verse 5 tells us what the law says: you get life for perfect obedience. That's the righteousness of the law. It is unattainable for you and me by our own works.

But remember, there's another righteousness—the righteousness of faith. This is the gospel-promise. And Paul turns to this other righteousness in verse 6:

But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down)

7 or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);

Again, Paul is citing Old Testament verses. He draws his proof-texts about the righteousness of faith from the Old Testament, proving that even to those who were under the law, the way of justification by faith was promised. The gospel-promise was hidden in the law.

And I wish we had time for an in-depth look at the context of the verses he cites, but we don't. So be sure you get the point here.

Paul is quoting from Deuteronomy 30, where Moses sums up the meaning of the law in a way that points the people toward faith rather than works. Moses sets before them a choice between life and death, good and evil. And the apostle Paul is saying that Moses' words, the very capstone of the law, pointed the people to faith. They implied the promise of

the gospel. They gave hope despite the curse of the law.

Deuteronomy 30:11-15:

For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.

12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?"

13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?"

14 But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

15 See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

Paul then takes that text and applies it to Christ. In effect, he pulls back the curtain and shows that all along, the purpose and the intent of the law was to point people to Christ by making them see the futility of trying to be righteous on their own and leaving them with no recourse but faith as the way of salvation.

In other words, even in its Mosaic context, this was a gracious, gentle, expression of God's willingness to save. And Paul explains the sense of it by applying it to Christ. We can't ascend to heaven in order to bring Christ down. And we can't descend into the deep in order to bring Him up from the dead. But everything that needs to be done for our salvation

has already been done on our behalf. There is nothing left for us to do but lay hold of it by faith.

And, Paul says, that is "**the word of faith, which we preach.**" It's about faith, not works. It's about believing, not doing. It's about laying hold by faith of that which we could never do. But Christ has already done it on behalf of his people. He obtained the law's promise of life, by obeying the whole law perfectly as our substitute and our proxy. And then he redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us and dying to pay the penalty that was owed us. That penalty he also paid as our substitute and our proxy. The proof that God accepted His work is gloriously declared in His resurrection.

We lay hold of Christ and the promise of justification by faith, and by faith alone. We cannot earn salvation by any merit of our own, because we have no merit of our own. So faith is the only possible way we can lay hold of it.

Now, two more points about faith before we move on. First, faith is objective, not subjective. In other words, faith is not some indistinct, ethereal feeling that we get, but it has a definite object. And the only true and valid object of saving faith is Christ. But it's again not just a vague and indistinct notion about Him. There is specific content to our faith. It involves certain biblical doctrines—essential articles of faith—that I don't want you to miss.

Verse 9; we must confess "**that Jesus is Lord**." In other words, there must be a recognition of His deity. Whenever the New Testament refers to Him as "Lord," the emphasis is on His deity. Paul uses the very same word you would use in Greek to translate YHWH, the covenant name of God. Jesus is God incarnate, and that is also what's implied in verse 6, when Paul speaks of bringing Him down from above.

The title *LORD* also involves an implicit recognition of His absolute right to rule. True faith in Christ as Lord is incompatible with hard-hearted rebellion against His lordship. You're not a true Christian if you haven't embraced Christ by faith as your Lord and God and yielded your heart to His lordship and authority.

It should also go without saying that the expression also implies an unquestioning recognition of His ability to save. True saving faith leans on Christ alone as God and Lord and Savior—and that is why if you haven't abandoned all hope whatsoever in anything else you might think will save you from your sin, you're not believing in Christ in the sense our text requires. If you're holding on to acts of penance, or if you think church membership alone will do it, or if you retain any hope that your own good works will earn you favor with God, then you haven't believed in your heart the way our text demands.

And the objective, doctrinal content of genuine saving faith doesn't stop there. Notice the second half of verse 9.

You must also "**believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead.**" After all, if the resurrection is proof of Christ's justification, you can't doubt the testimony of Scripture about that objective, historical fact and still be saved. First Corinthians 15:17: "**If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.**"

So our faith has objective content, and the one true object of saving faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, as He is revealed to us in Scripture. That's where saving faith begins, and that is where true faith must ultimately rest.

If you believe those things in your heart and confess them with your mouth, Paul says, "**you will be saved.**"

That brings us to the third key idea we find in these two verses. It's the idea of—

3. CONFESSION

Now, let me say as clearly as possible that when Paul speaks of confessing with your mouth, he is not saying this external act is a work that must be added to faith in order to merit salvation. He is not suggesting that some work must be added to faith in order to make it efficacious for salvation. Throughout his epistles he consistently teaches that no work is necessary to merit salvation. Romans 4:5: **"To the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."** Remember Titus 3:5, which I quoted already: **"[Christ] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."** And 2 Timothy 1:9 says God **"saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace."**

But here Paul includes the idea of confession for two reasons. First, notice once again verse 8: **"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith)."** So it's all about faith. But remember that verse 8 is a quotation from Deuteronomy 30:14: **"The word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart."**

Paul is still thinking of that text, and its reference to the mouth and the heart. He's pointing out that the way of salvation is not through something external, like the law inscribed on tablets of stones. But we lay hold of salvation

by genuine faith, and genuine faith is expressed in the mouth and the heart.

And that's the second reason he stresses confession with the mouth: he is talking about the *expression* of genuine faith, not the ontology of faith. In other words, when we make a true verbal confession of faith, that is just how true faith shows itself; it's not how you *get* faith, or muster faith within yourself. Verbal confession is the natural and expected result of true faith. It's therefore a valid test of faith's reality. Faith is the sole instrument of justification; but if it's real faith, it will bear the fruit of confession, because (verse 11) "**Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame**"—or as the King James Version has it, "**Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.**"

This is very similar to what James says in James 2:18: "**Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**" We could adapt that phrase to what Paul is saying here: *You try to testify about your faith without a confession if you can find a way to do that; I'll show you my faith by confessing it.*

Faith and good works are not the same thing, but if it's true faith, it will bear the fruit of good works. True faith and a confession of faith are not the same thing, either, but authentic faith will bear the fruit of a sound confession. That's what Paul is saying.

How do we confess our faith? There are many ways. Baptism, properly understood, is a confession of faith. That's why here at Grace Church we follow the apostolic practice of asking converts to give a confession of faith—a testimony about how they came to faith—when they are baptized.

Baptism ought to be one of the first steps of obedience for every Christian, and if you consider yourself a believer but have never been baptized, especially if you are holding off baptism because you are afraid of confessing your faith publicly, you ought to examine yourself to see whether you are *truly* in the faith.

Now, I'm *not* saying that you ought to regard a baptism or a verbal confession of faith as automatic proof of genuine faith, and Paul wouldn't say that, either. Notice (verse 10): "**with the heart one believes and is justified.**" Faith must be borne in the heart before it can be truly expressed on the lips. And that's the proper order. (The only reason Paul mentions confession *before* faith in verse 9 is because he is doing an exposition of Deuteronomy 30:14, so he follows Moses' word order.) But it's obvious (isn't it?) that faith must precede any honest confession.

Confession of faith doesn't end with baptism, either. I hope you are bold to confess your faith in the workplace, or at school, or wherever you encounter unbelievers. If you shy away from that kind of verbal confession of your faith, again, I would urge you to examine your heart.

Matthew 5:16 says: "**Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**" Now if you understand *that* text in light of *our* text, a couple of vital truths become clear. First, the chief way to let your light shine before other men, and the most important "good work" that should be visible in your life, is your confession of faith in Christ. I hope you tell everyone you know that you are a Christian. If you're keeping that a secret, you are not letting your light shine the way Jesus meant. And I hope you tell people why you are a Christian and how they can also be Christians. That's one of the main points of Romans 10: "**how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?**" (v. 14). You need to speak up; "**Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.**"

Now, someone might point out that the verse I just read from Matthew 5 connects the idea of letting your light shine with the fact that people should be able to see the good works you do. And a lot of people mistakenly assume it is possible to be a faithful witness for Christ simply by the way you live—without ever speaking a word. You've heard the saying, I'm sure: "*Preach the gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.*"

That's a cute sentiment. (It's usually attributed to St. Francis of Assisi), and there's a hint of truth to it: what you do is often more effective than what you say in convincing

people that the gospel is true. But what *our* text makes inescapably clear is that what you say is not optional. *You cannot faithfully preach the gospel at all without words.* If you try to leave off the words, all you will be doing is impressing people with your own good works (which the Bible says are like filthy rags anyway), instead of pointing them to the work of Christ (which is truly perfect). Truly preaching the gospel necessarily involves words—including a verbal confession of faith. That, again, is one of the main points of our text: **"With the mouth one confesses and is saved."**

Notice one other thing before we draw this to a close, and it's this: the fact that we are to make a confession of faith also underscores the fact that true faith is objective, not subjective. Articles of faith are expressed in true propositions. That's what our doctrinal statement is all about. That's why doctrinal statements are often referred to as "confessions of faith."

I hope your faith is real, and objective, and something you think about in such a way that you can articulate it in a sound confession. That is the natural, expected, and inevitable result of true faith, and as that's why as you study God's Word and learn sound doctrine and feed your soul with the truth of Scripture, your faith will be strengthened. Meanwhile, you ought to be confessing your faith verbally, every opportunity you get.

In closing, let me point out that this text we have been looking at today is a promise. **"If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."** That's the gospel promise. Believe it in your heart in such a way that you cannot help confessing it with your mouth, and you will be saved. The gospel is just that simple: **"Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."**

It's also an invitation. If you labor and are heavily laden and weary of the struggle of trying to earn God's approval on your own, lay hold of Christ by faith. Recognize that He alone can do—and has already done—what the law demands of you (and what you could never do for yourself)—and turn to Him in faith as your risen Lord and only Savior. The promise of God is true: when you do that, you will be saved.